Educational and Socio-economic Status of Girl Workers in Baruipur NCLP Schools

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Abstract

Approximately 160 million children worldwide are engaged in child labour, according to the estimate of **International Labour Organisation**. The percentage of children in child labour is highest in low and middle income countries. Girls being forced into child employment, area serious problem in developing nations like India. Not only the girls are the victims of gender inequity, but they are also denied basic human rights like nutrition and education. Girls under the age of 14 are compelled to join labour force. These young girls who work as child labourers are vulnerable to physical, emotional, and even sexual abuse. South 24 Parganas in West Bengal has the highest percentage of girl child labourers. This paper the researchers have focused on girl child workers in Baruipur NCLP Schools. The **objectives** of this paper are to analyse the present educational and socio-economic status of girl child labourers in **Baruipur NCLP Schools**. **In depth study in real life situation** is essential to address the problem. So, the **Case study research methodology** has been followed. **Data** have been **collected** through both close-ended and open-ended questionnaires, unstructured interviews, observation, and document survey. **The participants** are the girl workers enrolled in 4 NCLP special training centers of Baruipur, their guardians and teachers. The researchers have tried to identify **the problem areas in real fields** and **found the bleak situation of the girl child workers.**

Key words: Girl worker, NCLP school, Socio-economic status

1. Introduction

259.6 million children in India between the ages of 5 and 14 make up the entire population according to the 2011 Census; of them, 10.1 million (or 3.9% of the total) are working as main workers or marginal workers in different sectors. The term *child labour* is frequently used to describe employment that is detrimental to a child's physical and mental development and robs them of their youth, potential, and dignity (ILO 2017, p.17). The practice of child labour prevents children from acquiring the necessary skills and education to secure respectable employment chances in adulthood. Child labour persists in India due to a number of factors, including inequality, a lack of educational opportunities, a delayed demographic change, customs, and cultural expectations. Factors such as age, gender, ethnicity, caste, and socioeconomic status influence the kind and level of work that children do. Children still find themselves working in the unorganized sector and in agriculture.

2. Descriptive Framework

The researchers reviewed a number of related studies to prepare a descriptive as well as a conceptual framework before conducting the investigation. **Nagesha and Kadam (2023)** analyse child labour in India and its causes. This study uses only secondary data. **Sayeed (2023)** examines child labour across latitudes using qualitative and quantitative methods. This paper presents the situation of the child labour and discusses its consequences. Finally, the measures provided may help resolve child labour difficulties. **Sahoo (2021)** examined child

labour across social classes in India and its tendencies. It studies how children's socioeconomic background influences employment. Another paper examines Bangle industry women and children in Hyderabad's ancient city (**Pande, 2023**).

Girls are more vulnerable to exploitation and deprivation. West Bengal is ranked sixth among the states with 550092 child labourers of ages 5 to 14; 340163 of these are boys, and 209929 are girls. South 24 Parganas, a district in West Bengal, has the most girl workers altogether, 23315 (data.gov.in). Present study focuses on the condition of girl child workers in the South 24 Parganas district. In order to rehabilitate working children, the government launched the **National Child Labour Project (NCLP) Scheme** in 1988.This is the main initiative of the Government of India to rehabilitate child labour. With a primary focus on the rehabilitation of children employed in hazardous works and processes, the Scheme aims to implement a sequential strategy. The identified children are to be taken out of these paid or unpaid labour and placed in special schools so that they can eventually be mainstreamed into the regular educational system.

There are 21 **NCLP schools** in South 24 Parganas. The researchers have selected the sub-division named **Baruipur** for the detailed study.

3. Objectives

The objectives of the present study are –

  i. To depict the socio-economic conditions of the girl students studying under NCLP Schools,
  ii. To analyse the educational status of the girl workers studying under NCLP Schools.

4. Research Questions

Two research questions are formulated on the basis of the selected objectives –

  i. What are the socio-economic conditions of the girl students studying under NCLP Schools?
  ii. What is the educational status of the girl workers studying in NCLP Schools?

5. Methodology

A **case study research** approach has been chosen by the researchers to examine the socio-economic conditions and educational status of the girl workers studying under NCLP Schools to conduct in-depth study in a real-life setting. This approach was supported by a survey and an examination of current documents, including written and verbal interaction, government documents and records, and numerical data.

The **study area** is **Baruipur** sub-division of South-24 Parganas. **Four NCLP schools** are located in **Baruipur**, named

  - Patheya NCLP centre,
  - Hatekhari NCLP centre,
  - Porua NCLP centre,
  - Chetona NCLP centre.

Data have been collected from **5 girl students, 2 parents** and **2 teachers** from each of selected **10 NCLP schools**. The researchers have used **observation, unstructured interview**, **self-constructed questionnaires (both close-ended and open-ended)** to collect qualitative and numerical data.

6. Analysis, Interpretation & Results

The **qualitative data** has been gathered, identified, and reduced; then it has been divided into themes using both **inductive and deductive coding**, and it has been analysed based on the research objectives. The researcher employed **various analytical techniques**, including **content analysis** to examine texts and documents, **narrative analysis** to examine responses obtained from respondents through **both close-ended** and **open-ended questions, interviews,** and **observation method** to examine all activities and programmes, and framework analysis method to examine documents gathered (**Berg, 2017**). The **data triangulation** method was applied since several data sources and tools were used.
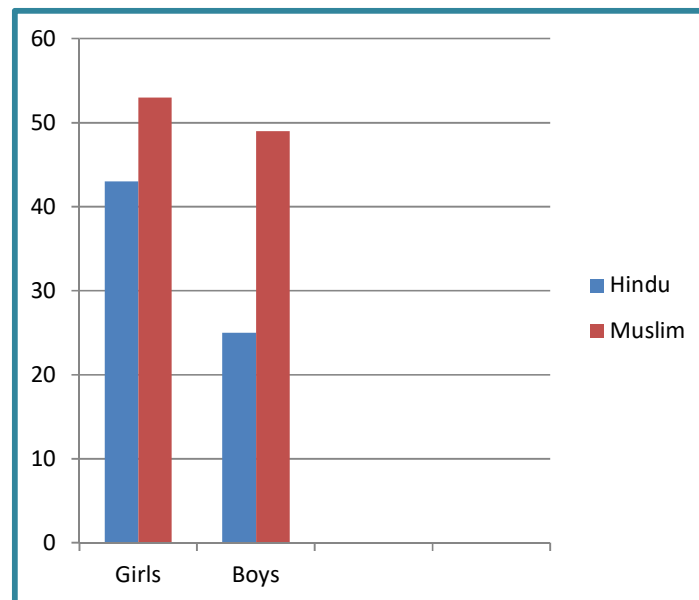
Objective-wise Analysis and Interpretation

6.1 Socio-economic status of the girl workers studying under NCLP schools

6.1.1 Demographic distribution of students

Girls		Boys	
Hindu	**Muslim**	**Hindu**	**Muslim**
43	**53**	**25**	**49**
Total =96		**Total=74**	
Total = 170			

<div align="center">Table 1: Demographic distribution of students</div>

<div align="center">Fig.1: Demographic distribution of students</div>

The enrolment data shows clear patterns in the allocation of students based on their gender and religion. Out of the total number of girls, there are Muslim 53 students and 43Hindu students. Conversely, the boys' enrolment consists of 49 Muslim students, who constitute the majority, while the remaining 25 boys are Hindu. The data reveals that Muslim students, including both males and females, have a greater representation than Hindu students. Additionally, female students have a higher enrolment rate than their male counterparts. These data represent the demographic makeup and societal factors that may influence school attendance among various religion and gender groupings.
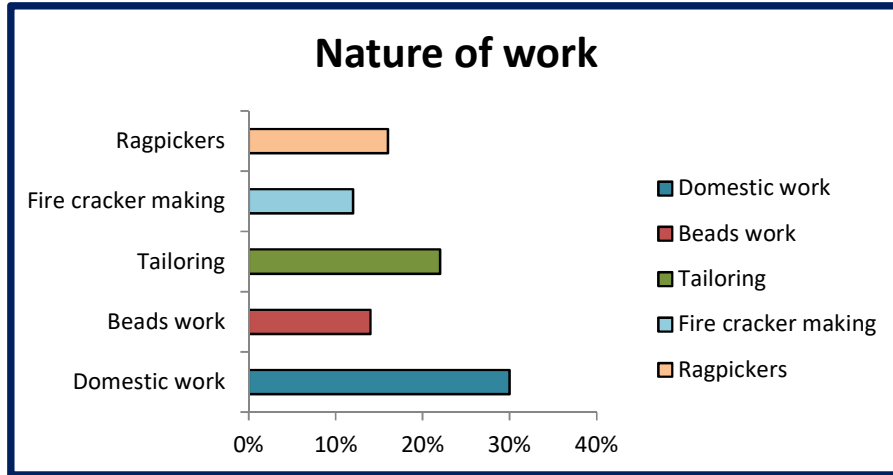
6.1.2 Nature of work

Fig. 2: Nature of work

The data regarding the type of work carried out by girl child labourers reveals a wide variety of activities. Among them **30%**are employed in **domestic activities. Tailoring (22%)** is the next largest segment. **14%** of females work in beads, and **12%** make fire crackers, which is dangerous. **16%** of girl child labourers collect and sort rubbish. This distribution shows the many sectors where girl child labour is common, frequently in risky and physically demanding jobs.

6.1.3 Reasons of engaging in labour force
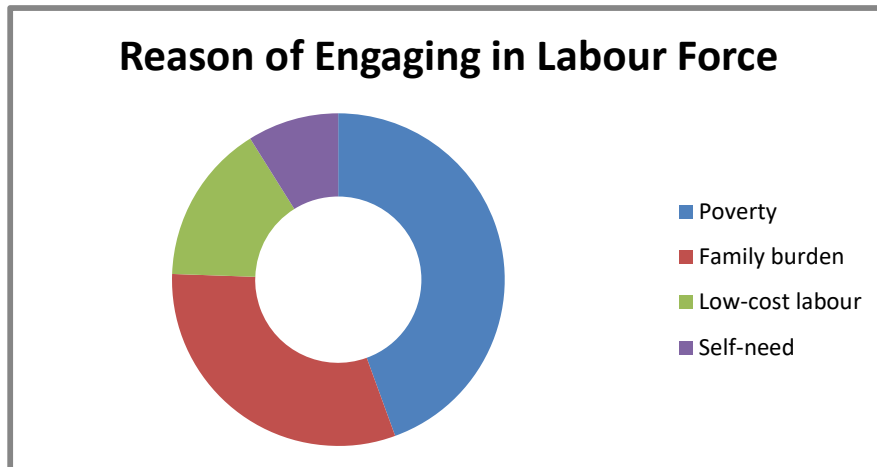
Fig. 3: Reasons of engaging in labour force

The **main catalyst** compelling children to join the labour force is unquestionably **poverty**. When families are unable to afford basic essentials such as food, water, education, or medical care, they are compelled to have their children engage in labour in order **to increase their household income**. The children are forced to engage themselves to share the **economic burden of the family**. Some are also engaged in labour force to fulfil their **self-need**.

6.2 Educational status of the girl students studying under NCLP schools

6. 2.1 Educational standard, gender and religion-wise classification of child workers in selected schools

Class	Total Enrolment				
	Girls		Boys		
	Hindu	Muslim	Hindu	Muslim	Total
I	12	26	08	17	63
II	10	12	07	18	47
III	17	09	06	07	39
IV	04	06	04	07	21
Total	43	53	25	49	170

Table 2: Educational standard, gender and religion-wise classification of child workers in selected schools

The enrolment data for classes I through IV indicates **notable patterns and discrepancies in terms of gender and religious affiliation**. The current enrolment is 170 children, with a higher ratio of girls (96 girls) compared to boys (74 boys). The gender imbalance is apparent in all classes, particularly in Class I, where there are 38 female students compared to 25 male students.

Upon analysing the **religious distribution**, it is evident that there are more Muslim pupils than Hindu students, and this pattern remains similar across all classes. It is worth mentioning that Muslim girls have the biggest number of pupils enrolled in Class I. In each class, Muslim females consistently have a greater number of students enrolled compared to Hindu girls.

Class I has the largest total number of students (63), suggesting a possible higher number of students entering in the beginning. On the other hand, Class IV has the smallest number of students (21), which may indicate **a decrease in the number of students as they go through the grades or restricted capacity at higher levels**.

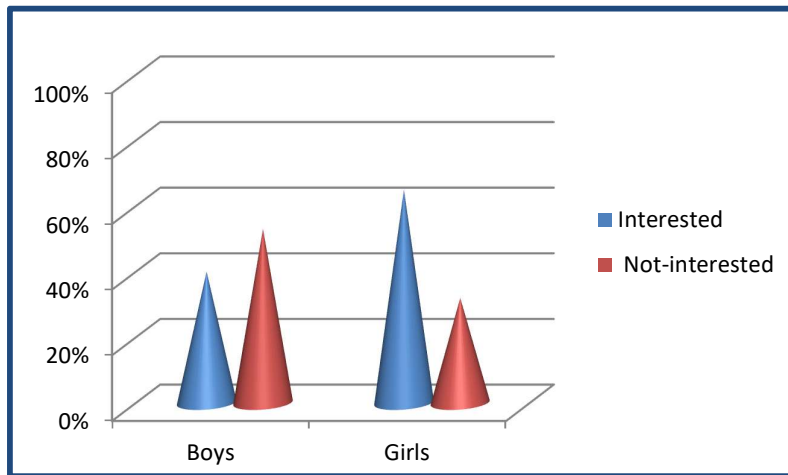**6.2.2 Interest of child workers to Education**

Fig. 3: Interest of child workers to Education

The researchers have found that the **girls are more interested** in receiving education in comparison to boys. **40%**of the boys are interested in receiving education and going to school and **53%**of the boys are not interested to do the same. **65%**of the girls are interested in receiving education and going to school and **32%**of the girls are not interested to do the same.

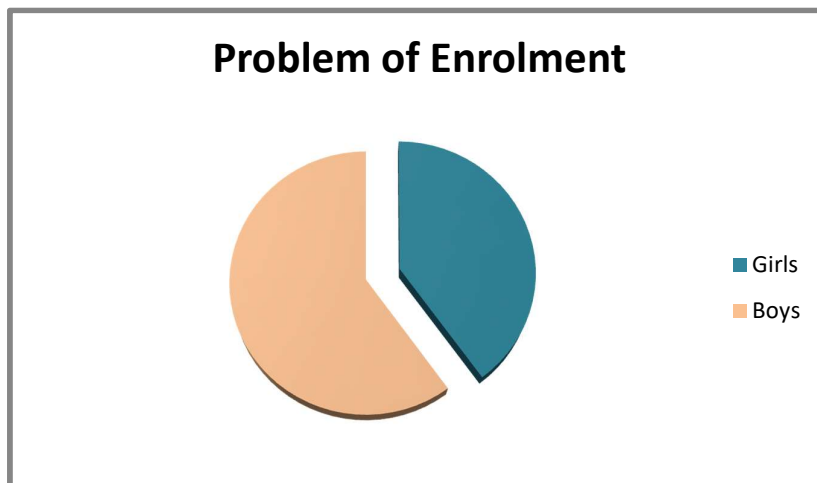**6.2.3   Problem during enrolment**

Fig. 3: Problem during enrolment

The guardians of the boy's face more problems regarding their ward's Enrolment to the NCLP schools in comparison to that of girls. 40% of the girls' parents reported the problem regarding their daughters' enrolment whereas it is 60% in the case of boys.
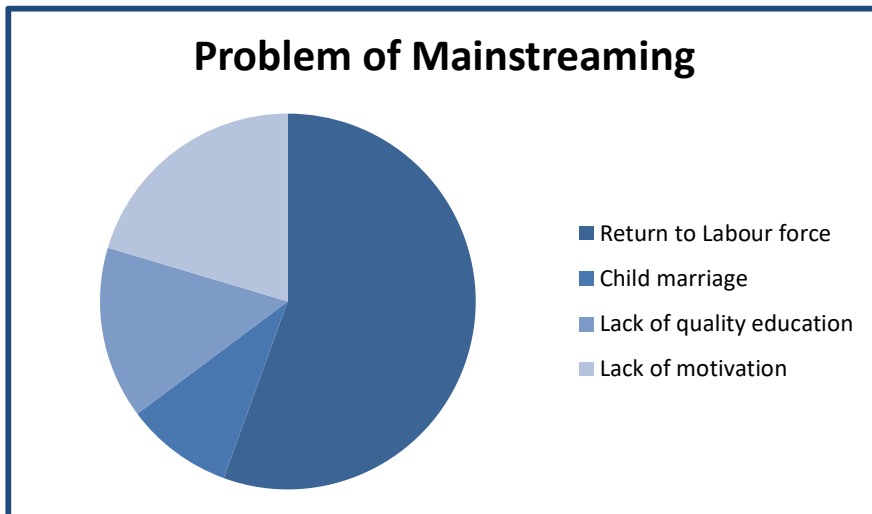
6.2.4 Problem of mainstreaming

Fig.4: Problem of mainstreaming

The problem of mainstreaming mainly for the girl child labourers are due to several reasons. The main reason is the **return of the child labourer to the work force again**. The second reason is the **lack of motivation** to continue the study. 22% of the girls do not enter the regular schooling system because of the lack of motivation from their parents. **Lack of quality education** and **child marriage** are other significant causes.

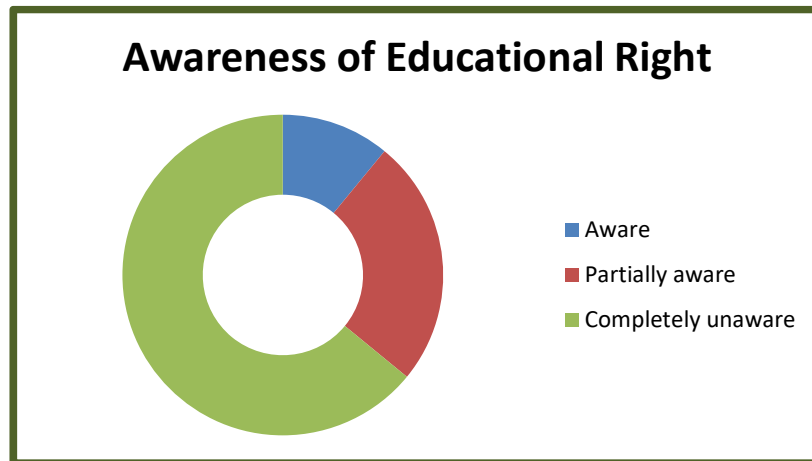### 6.2.5 Awareness regarding Educational Right

Fig.5: Awareness regarding Educational Right

The majority of parents of girl child labourers are either illiterate or did not complete primary education. Only **14%** of the parents are aware of the RTE'2009, while **24%** have heard the

name but did not have a thorough understanding of it. However, **62%** of parents are unaware of the existence of the Right to Education Act of 2009.

7. Findings

Demographic distribution of students is important because it helps to describe the nature of students. The data reveals that Muslim students, including both males and females, have a greater representation than Hindu students. Additionally, female students have a higher enrolment rate than their male counterparts. **There are considerable discrepancies in enrolment rates based on gender and religious affiliation.** The enrolment data for classes I through IV indicates **notable patterns and discrepancies in terms of gender and religious affiliation**.These patterns may suggest that there are societal dynamics that impact educational access and retention.

Poverty is a significant cause of child labour, and it is associated with various causes like poor literacy, limited job opportunities, and financial burden of the families. The relationship between child labour and poverty is interconnected in a relentless loop that cannot be disrupted without addressing either one. Another reason of drop out of girl child labours is**lack of motivation** from the parents. **Girl child workers returned to labour as they were unable to be mainstreamed**.

8. Recommendations and Conclusion

Child labour serves as an alternate means for families experiencing financial hardships due to insufficient employment opportunities, joblessness, or mounting debt to supplement their meagre earnings. The existence of child labour is perpetuated by the demand for inexpensive labour in several sectors, including industry, domestic service, and agriculture. These girls were part of the marginalised segment of society, as they were compelled to enter the workforce and were denied their childhood**.** The researchers finally propose a set of measures to protect the fundamental rights of these children to receive high-quality education and to reduce the prevalence of the societal problem known as 'child labour'.

These speciality schools need **consistent funding**. **Local awareness initiatives** should teach the community about the **Right to Education Act of 2009**, child labour, healthcare, and other essentials .**Parents, workers, employers, and the community** should work together. Authorities must mandate school monitoring. Child labourers and their parents need **occupational skill development** to make their livelihood better. **Rehabilitating** female workers requires **professional training and self-employment**. Girl child labourers should not be hired in homes, businesses, stores, and factories.

In order to sustain their motivation, it is advisable to increase the frequency of these initiatives. Regularising the flow of funds would pose a significant challenge in removing these female child labourers from the workforce and integrating them into society. The maturation of female children labourers must be accorded the utmost importance, as India cannot attain the international goals of **equalisation of educational opportunities and quality education** if they are excluded.

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